



Ike Liked Angus

Herdsman Robert Hartley reminisces about the days of the Eisenhower Farm and their famous herd of Angus cattle.

by Janet Mayer

For most Americans, the name Dwight David Eisenhower conjures up images of the five-star general and 34th President of the United States. Probably one of the lesser known attributes of Eisenhower was his role as a farmer and cattleman.

In 1950, anticipating his retirement from the Army, Eisenhower and his wife, Mamie, purchased a 189-acre dairy farm on the outskirts of Gettysburg, Pa. However, his retirement was delayed for another decade because of the presidency. Finally, in 1961, after the inauguration of John F. Kennedy, the Eisenhowers departed Washington for the last time.

Eisenhower later wrote of the event in his memoirs: "And so we came to Gettysburg, and to the farm we had bought 11 years earlier, where we expected to spend the remainder of our lives."

The Kansas farm boy had come full circle. He was back to his farming roots.

Eisenhower's goal as a farmer was to leave his Gettysburg farm better than he had found it. He took a personal interest in his farming operation and implemented techniques based on his own readings and his discussions with other farmers. He was a successful farmer and purebred Angus breeder for more than 15 years.

In an effort to tell the story of the historic Eisenhower Herd, the Angus Journal arranged to meet with Robert Hartley, former Eisenhower herdsman. Carol Hegeman, National Park Service supervisor of the Eisenhower National Historic Site, graciously allowed the interview to take place in Ike's attic studio. Thanks goes to both Hegeman and Hartley for their help in piecing together the facts for this story.





The sound of heavy rain pelting against the attic roof makes hearing Robert Hartley's soft voice difficult. The former Eisenhower herdsman, neatly attired in a dark blue sports coat and red tie, sits across the table, hands folded in his lap.

Index cards bearing neat, handwritten notes are stacked in readiness on the table in front of him. The attic studio of the late General Eisenhower is sparsely furnished and slightly chilly. From the floor below comes the muted sound of school children passing through on their tour of the Eisenhower farm house. It is early May and numerous school groups tour the farm complex daily on their spring class field trips.

"I wonder how much those school children know about General Eisenhower," Hartley says. "After the General sold the herd, I worked for other Angus operations here in the East for a few years. Later I went back to Penn State to get my teaching certificate in vocational agriculture. After I started to teach, I recall one time I showed my class some slides of the General and myself. They couldn't identify either one of us, so it makes me curious as to what students think when they come here."

"Eisenhower believed the best way to improve his farmland was with a beef herd. More than once I heard the General say that he didn't want anything marketed off the farm that couldn't walk," Hartley recalls. "He did not want any crop grown that could not be fed to the cattle. And of course he was very aware of the value of the manure in improving the organic content of the soil."

In September 1956, Hartley was hired as herdsman by Eisenhower on the recommendation of Herman Purdy, a professor at Pennsylvania State University. Purdy had been introduced to the General by his brother, Dr. Milton Eisenhower, then president of Penn State.

Purdy advised the General concerning selection of cattle for the herd and so his help was utilized in finding a herdsman. Hartley, a former student of Purdy's, seemed a good choice.

A recent graduate of Penn State at the time, Hartley had already held several herd management positions and had served in the Army in Korea.

He began his employment at the farm on November 1, 1956 and remained there until the herd was sold 10 years later.

"When I began working for General Eisenhower, he owned 14 cows and a yearling heifer. November 8, 1955 is the record I have of the first calf being born on the farm. The dam of the calf had been bred before arriving at the farm. I believe a few of these cows were purchased in 1955, but most in the spring of 1956," recalls Hartley.

Actually the first animal in the Eisenhower herd was a heifer given to Eisenhower by the Brandywine Angus Association, a group located in the Gettysburg area. When it became known that the president was going to raise Angus cattle, he received gifts of cattle from other state Angus associations and various other sources.

Most of the first cattle purchased came from nationally known herds such as Hickmere's Highlands, Millarden Farms, Whitney Farms, Duncraggan Farms, Moles Hill Farms, Amandale Farms and the Dalmeny Herd in Scotland. Herd bulls at the farm were Bandolier 227 of Brandy Rock, from the Brandy

Rock herd in Virginia; Ankonian 3551, on loan and later purchased from Ankony Farms in New York, and Amandale Eileenmere 494-8.

One of the outstanding animals in the Eisenhower herd was Ankonian Jonah. In June 1965, half interest in Ankonian Jonah was purchased for \$20,000 from Ankony Farms. A month or so later, Eisenhower Farms and Ankony Farms each sold one-sixth interest in Jonah for a total of \$50,000 to Schearbrook Farms.

The sale was made with the stipulation that Schearbrook would pay both Eisenhower and Ankony an additional \$5,000 each if Jonah should win a champion ribbon at the International Livestock Show. The bull was the junior champion bull at the 1965 International Livestock Show. A month later, he earned grand champion at the 1966 National Western Livestock Show in Denver. Jonah was classified 95 by the American Angus Association, one of the highest scores ever given an Angus bull, Hartley says.

Practically all the cows were bred to Jonah after his purchase in 1965. In the early years of the herd, most cows were bred to Ankonian 3551 and a few to Black Brutus of EF, a bull imported in dam from Scotland. After an interest in Amandale Eileenmere 492-



Bob Hartley at the halter of the Eisenhower Farm bull Eileenmere EF 5127, sired by Ankonian 3551. He was the first place early summer yearling at the 1961 International Livestock Show in Chicago. Later that year, he was the grand champion bull at the 1961 Keystone International Livestock Show.

8 was acquired, they attempted to select which bull to use, based on strengths and weaknesses of the cows.

Amandale Eileenmere 492-8 was also used on all the daughters of Ankonian 3551. Amandale Eileenmere 4948 and Jonah were used only by artificial insemination, whereas, Ankonian 3551 was used both naturally and AI.

Artificial insemination was no easy feat in those days. Hartley says he wasn't familiar with A.I. at that time, so he took a course at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

"The first few years we did the procedure, we had to use fresh semen that was good for only three or four days after collection," he says. "We owned a bull jointly with Brandy Rock Farm, about 125 miles from Gettysburg. When I had a cow in heat, I would call them and tell them to do a collection. Then I would have to drive down to get the semen and back again as fast as possible. We would refrigerate the semen and examine it under a microscope. We tried to use it on as many cows as possible. Overall, we had a pretty good conception rate."

Two of Hartley's favorite cows, both daughters of Rally Black Belmore 6, were bred in the Nittany Farms herd and purchased for the farm by Herman Purdy. A daughter of one of these cows, sired by Ebony Arlando of Rowley, was one of the best young cows in the herd, he recalls. Two other cows with exceptional size and skeletal correctness were daughters of Bandoliermere 83, Downsbragh Blackcap Norma 7 and Downsbragh Black Empress 4. Blackbird B of AB, a daughter of Black Brutus of EF, was a show heifer that produced Blackbird EF774.

"EF774 was 1966 grand champion female of the Pennsylvania Farm Show and was possibly the best female produced in the Eisenhower herd," Hartley says.

Another outstanding female was Jilt EF30. She was the reserve grand champion female at the 1962 Eastern National Livestock Shows. She was classified 93 by the American Angus Association, the highest classified female in the Eisenhower herd.

"I can only speculate as to why the General chose the Angus



breed," Hartley says. "It was probably because Angus were best suited to conditions in Pennsylvania. Also, many of his friends bred Angus and that influenced his decision."

One such friend was George Allen, who owned a small farm about a mile south of the Eisenhower farm. Allen and Texas oilman B.G. Byars kept some of the cattle at the Eisenhower farm during Eisenhower's presidential years. In exchange for using the land and facilities, they took care of the Eisenhower herd, which at the time was small in size. Eisenhower did not personally participate in the purchase or sale of show cattle. From 1955 to 1960, the cattle from Eisenhower Farms were represented under the Allen and Byar herd names. From 1961 to 1966, the cattle were shown and sold under the Eisenhower Farms name.

Another close friend of Eisenhower who played an important role in the farm operation was W. Alton Jones. Jones bought what is known as farms number 2 and 3 to ensure the President's privacy. According to Hartley, in 1961, after the president had left office, Jones became a partner in the operation of the farm and herd. The partnership was, however, short-lived as Jones was killed in a plane crash. Later, Jones' widow gave the farms to the National Park Service with the stipulation that Eisenhower be granted the use of them during his lifetime.

Eisenhower cattle were shown at numerous stock shows over the years. These included the International Livestock Show in Chicago, the Eastern National Livestock Show in Maryland, the Keystone International and Pennsylvania Farm Show, the Eastern States Exposition in Massachusetts, and the Maryland State Fair. The show cattle were successful, earning 21 grand championships, 14 reserve grand championships, 17 senior championships and 130 first place ribbons.

Hartley says the show cattle were fed a special ration of corn, oats, cooked barley, linseed pellets and/or Calf Manna and bran. They were also housed in a specially ventilated showbarn located a great distance from the main house on farm number 2. This location was at the direction of Mrs. Eisenhower, who detested the flies that accompanied the cattle.

Cattle from the Eisenhower herd were marketed through consignment sales. The bulls were sold at the Great Atlantic Bull Show & Sale, the Black Magic Bull Show & Sale, the International Bull Sale, and the All-American Bull Sale in Denver. The females were usually marketed through both consignment sales and joint production sales with Brandy Bock Farms in Virginia. The last production sale was held in April 1966.

Eisenhower always enjoyed eating the beef he raised and would keep plenty of beef for his own use. "The General always made sure the beef he kept was high-prime," Hartley says. "He had a walk-in meat cooler built in the garage attached to the barn. He would let the meat age until it got mold on it."

It is said by various sources that Eisenhower would make a great show of cooking his steaks on the brick barbecue at the back of the house. He was a perfectionist in his cooking and tolerated no delay when he called guests to the table to partake of his grilled, fork-tender steaks.

The Eisenhower Angus herd was dispersed in the fall of 1966. Hartley recalls Eisenhower's decision:

"General Eisenhower told me he had decided to sell the

herd because his health was such that he could die unexpectedly at anytime. He said he realized that his friend General Nevins and I could handle selling the herd, but there would still be decisions Mrs. Eisenhower would have to make. He didn't wish to burden her if it could be avoided."

At the time of dispersal, there were 102 cows in the herd. The cattle were all sold privately before it became public knowledge that the herd was being dispersed.

The Eisenhowers made a gift of their farm to the U.S. Government in 1967 with the agreement they be permitted to reside there for the remainder of their lives. The Gettysburg farm was the only home the couple ever owned.

Dwight Eisenhower died on March 28, 1969 and Mamie Eisenhower died 10 years later. After the death of Mrs. Eisenhower, the 690-acre farm was put under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. The site was opened to the public in 1980 as The Eisenhower National Historic Site.

In celebration of the 100th birthday anniversary of Dwight David Eisenhower, the American Angus Association and the Pennsylvania Angus Association, in

conjunction with the National Park Service, have planned a field day and sale to salute Eisenhower the Angus breeder. The event will take place at Eisenhower Farms in Gettysburg, Pa., on August 18-19. A schedule of activities follows:



Dwight D. Eisenhower, while president of the United States in 1959 discusses an Eisenhower Farms Angus bull calf he is holding with the late Herman Purdy of Pennsylvania State University.

Eisenhower Farm Celebration

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| Thursday, August 16 | Sale cattle arrive |
| Friday, August 17 | Sale cattle arrive |
| 9 a.m. | Registration at Ramada Inn (The Ramada Inn in Gettysburg, Pa., will be the headquarters; to make reservations call 1-800-228-2828 or (717) 334-8121.) |
| 1 p.m. | Guided tour of Gettysburg Battlefield, Electric Map and the Eisenhower house Cost of the tour will be \$17.25 per adult; \$14.25 per child. |
| Saturday, August 18 | |
| 9 a.m. | Educational demonstrations to the public |
| 1 p.m. | Angus cattle sale |
| 5 p.m. | Demonstrations end |
| Sunday, August 19 | |
| 9 a.m. | Educational demonstrations to the public |
| 5 p.m. | Demonstrations and cattle released |

All Angus breeders, buyers and consignors will be able to obtain a special parking permit at the registration desk. This will allow them to park their vehicles in an area where only parking by permit will be allowed. Cattle trailers will be parked in a separate area.

For more information, contact the American Angus Hall of Fame, (816) 532-0811.